

Dads Play a Key Role in Breastfeeding Success, Experts Say

While breastfeeding is often viewed as a bonding experience between mother and baby, experts say fathers play a crucial—yet sometimes overlooked—role in supporting successful breastfeeding. From providing emotional encouragement to managing day-to-day tasks, dads can have a significant impact on both the mother's well-being and the baby's development.

Health professionals emphasize that breastfeeding offers multiple benefits. It provides ideal nutrition, strengthens a baby's immune system, and supports healthy development. For mothers, it can reduce certain health risks and aid in postpartum recovery. Understanding these advantages, experts note, helps fathers become more confident and active partners in the process.

The father's role begins long before the first feeding. Specialists recommend that dads attend prenatal and breastfeeding classes alongside their partners to learn the basics and reduce uncertainty. Preparing a comfortable space for feedings—such as arranging supportive seating, proper lighting, and easy access to water—also contributes to early success.

In the first days after birth, breastfeeding can come with challenges. Fathers can offer significant support by helping limit distractions, managing visitors, and ensuring a calm environment for feedings. Encouragement is key; experts say early difficulties are common, and reassurance from a partner can help mothers stay motivated.

Practical involvement also matters. Tasks such as burping the baby after feeds, handling diaper changes, managing household responsibilities, and helping with nighttime routines can relieve stress and allow the nursing parent to rest. Simple gestures—like providing water during feedings—can make a meaningful difference.

Some fathers express concern that breastfeeding might limit their bonding time with the baby. However, lactation specialists highlight that dads have many opportunities for connection, including skin-to-skin contact, baby-wearing, participating in bedtime routines, and engaging in quiet moments after feedings.

Recognizing when a mother needs additional breastfeeding support is another essential role for fathers. Encouraging professional help from a lactation

consultant, attending appointments, or advocating for the mother's preferences in clinical settings can provide critical reassurance during stressful moments.

Experts agree that while breastfeeding is natural, it often requires teamwork. And in that team, dads play an essential part. By staying involved, offering support, and sharing responsibilities, fathers help create an environment where both mother and baby can thrive.

The Meigs County Health Department's WIC program provides comprehensive support for families of breastfed babies. Our team includes trained breastfeeding professionals and paraprofessionals who are available Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., with a lunch break from 12 to 1 p.m.

You do not need to be enrolled in the WIC program to receive breastfeeding assistance—our services are open to all. And remember...We also encourage dads to be actively involved and welcome their participation in every aspect of the support we provide.

For more information, please contact Sherry Eagle, Certified Lactation Counselor or Stacy Paul, Breastfeeding Peer at 740-992-0392.

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